

PEOPLE & THINGS

LAST week's triumphant revival of "Hedda Gabler" has sharpened my appetite for the theatrical debut of Ibsen's most fervent disciple in this country: Mr. Angus Wilson.

Mr. Wilson's first play, "The Mulberry Bush," is scheduled for production (by Mr. Peter Glenville) during the coming season. It is he tells me, orthodox in construction: is set in a university city; and has for its subject the strains and dilemmas of the liberal outlook in modern times.

Ibsen is Mr. Wilson's favourite playwright—so much so, in fact, that he learnt Norwegian in order to study him more closely—and those who have read "Hemlock And After" and "The Wrong Set" will know that, as an analyst of the more capricious elements in human nature, Mr. Wilson can negotiate with Ibsen as prince with prince.

Work in Progress

MEANWHILE Mr. Wilson continues work on a new novel (archaeologists are his current subject) and this he hopes to follow with a second play, this time in the tradition of "Volpone" and "Medea"—the tradition, that is to say, of the mammoth virtuoso part. Provisionally entitled "Regardless of Cost," the play will hinge upon one of those all-devouring matrons whom Mr. Wilson delights to call forth from their forbidding, quilted lairs.

All this does not prevent Mr. Wilson the Civil Servant from settling, with his habitual courtesy and despatch, the problems posed by visitors to the British Museum Reading Room. Dr. Bannister himself could not make a faster time from Aagesen to Zwingli, and any momentary distractedness is due, not to the difficulties of Ibsenite construction, but to the lingering pressure of some out-of-the-way inquiry—such as that involving, last week, an early nineteenth-century plate of German origin inscribed with the baffling legend: "Why is Titian's daughter Kate like the late Mr. Pitt?"

Queen of the Cecil

WHO in modern India was known to the largest number of British people? Many would say Miss Florence Hotz, whose recent death in London passed almost unnoticed.

She was the proprietress of the Cecil Hotel in Delhi, where everyone went sooner or later, and to all her guests she was a friend, kind, companionable, generous. The Cecil, of all the big hotels I have stayed in, was most like a home, and it was Miss Hotz who

By ATTICUS

made it so. During the harsh years of war, many was the "abandoned wife" who went, for comfort or help to her in Delhi or at her other hotel, the romantic Wildflower Hall in the hills above Simla. "No flowers," said the notice of her death, but I put down these words to the memory of a kind heart and a shrewd head.

Born to be Queen?

IT is election time again in America (I am, of course, referring to the election of "Miss Rheingold 1955") and the beer drinkers of the U.S.A. are filling the ballot boxes in store and tavern to elect the girl who will receive a contract worth \$20,000 and a free trip to Hollywood.

Of the six beautiful girls chosen by the Miss Rheingold Election

sending exhibits and there will be a selection of Indian issues from the Queen's collection at Buckingham Palace.

As a delicate compliment to the Royal stamps, the Indian Post Office is itself exhibiting a copy of "The Royal Philatelic Collection," published by the Dropmore Press, and Sir John Wilson, Keeper of the Queen's Stamps and author of this classic, has been invited to India to supervise the Royal exhibit.

Two Great Wykehamists

THIS is an important week for Canon J. d'E. Firth, Chaplain and Assistant Master at Winchester. Not only is it expected that his appointment as Master of the Temple will be announced tomorrow, but on Thursday the Oxford University Press is to publish his "Rendall of Winchester," a biographical study of the great Headmaster.

M. J. Rendall served Winchester for thirty-seven years—as Classical Master, Second Master, and Headmaster. He was, in an almost imperceptible way, a revolutionary in his attitude to the established curriculum; one of the greatest teachers of the century, he was revolutionary also in his affiliations—for, unlike his predecessors in office, he was not in Holy Orders and he was educated at Harrow and Trinity, Cambridge.

I notice, by the way, that Canon Firth has nearly equalled his subject's record of service, since it is now thirty-one years since he joined the staff at Winchester as an Assistant Master and twenty-seven years since he became the school's Chaplain.

Revolutionary Ties

WITH us, the wearing of a collar and tie seems to represent a badge of social rank as important as, in other parts of the world, the wearing of shoes. In the last war great heat was engendered by the agitation of "other ranks" to be allowed to encumber themselves with collars and ties, and more recently a similar sartorial fever swept our police force.

The uniform of Russian officers has, since time immemorial, been topped by a jacket fastening high up on the neck, where it rigidly maintains its position with the help of a strip of white celluloid inside the collar.

If our Intelligence Services are as sharp-witted as we all hope, they will now be weighing up the fact, heavy with significance, pregnant with implication, that when Colonel-General Zhadov made a courtesy call on our Commander-in-Chief, General Urquhart, in Vienna the other day his powder blue uniform was topped by a powder-blue collar and tie.

His Excellency Requests

A PROPOS, Mr. Oliver Lyttelton regaling me recently with some of the more hilarious stories from the archives of the Colonial Office told of the calamitous invitation card to the first reception given by Lord and Lady "Blank" on his appointment early in the last century to the governorship of one of our most illustrious colonial possessions.

In the bottom right-hand corner was engraved the single word *Trousers*.

By the Way

THE increasing concern of the Church with temporal affairs has led, I am told, to Bishops being issued with two "in" trays—one labelled "Sacred" and the other "The Sacred."



Committee—two blondes, two brunettes and two brunettes—I am guessing that Miss Nancy Woodruff will queen it in the Rheingold advertisements next year. Although she is not the most lovely of the six, she is a blonde (they generally win), she looks younger than the other five, and on the voting papers she is photographed against a background of daisies while the others are backed by gladioli or an indeterminate plant resembling broccoli.

I shall be interested to learn if my reading of the American beer drinker's psychology is correct.

Landscape with Figures

IT is hard to believe that the ill winds and rains of the past summer have done any good, but on a visit a few days ago to the Festival Gardens in Battersea, I was surprised and delighted by the extraordinary beauty of the herbaceous borders and the freshness of the splendid lawns.

A further attraction was the sight of two Nobel Prize winners (both of the Class of 1948), Professor P. M. S. Blackett and Mr. T. S. Eliot, exchanging grave and courtly bows as the one made, surfeited, for the exit, while the other, the poet, directed his pensive step towards the romantic whirlpool of the roller-skating rink.

The Royal Stamps

THE Centenary International Stamp and Postal Exhibition to be opened by Mr. Nehru next month at New Delhi is likely to be a splendid affair and the Indian postal authorities have shown imagination in devising various side-shows such as an open-air performance of Rabindranath Tagore's famous "Post Office" and a competition in stamp-designing by children from all over the world.

More than fifty countries will be